

### AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend Claims 1, 4, 7, 8, 11, and 24. Claims 2, 3 5, 6, 9, 10, 12-23, 25-29, and 38 remain as originally pending.

1. (Currently Amended) A method of receiving a check identifier entered by a user, the method comprising:

requesting a user to review an original check identifier in MICR format, the original check identifier ~~including~~ comprising a plurality of numeric fields separated by separator symbols, the plurality of numeric fields ~~including~~ comprising a routing number field, an account number field and a check number field;

instructing the user to replace the separator symbols of the original check identifier in MICR format with replacement symbols, thereby obtaining a substitute check identifier, the substitute check identifier comprising the plurality of numeric fields separated by ~~with~~ the replacement symbols;

requesting the user to enter the substitute check identifier; and

identifying the routing number field, the account number field and the check number field within the entered substitute check identifier.

2. (Original) The method of Claim 1 wherein the users uses a computer keyboard to enter the replacement symbols.

3. (Original) The method of Claim 1 wherein the users uses a telephone keypad to enter the replacement symbols.

4. (Currently Amended) A method comprising instructing a user to replace ~~the~~ separator symbols within an original MICR format check identifier with replacement symbols, thereby obtaining a substitute check identifier, the original MICR format check identifier comprising numeric fields and the separator symbols, and the substitute check identifier comprising the numeric fields and the replacement symbols.

5. (Original) The method of Claim 4 further comprising instructing the user to enter the substitute check identifier with a computer keyboard.

6. (Original) The method of Claim 4 further comprising instructing the user to enter the substitute check identifier with a telephone keypad system.

7. (Currently Amended) A computer program for check entry system comprising:

~~a first instruction module~~ computer code stored on a computer-readable medium configured to instruct a user to replace the separator symbols within an original MICR format check identifier with replacement symbols, thereby obtaining a substitute check identifier, the original MICR format check identifier comprising numeric fields and the separator symbols, and the substitute check identifier comprising the numeric fields and the replacement symbols; and

~~a second instruction module~~ computer code stored on a computer-readable medium configured to instruct the user to enter the substitute check identifier into a compute system or a telephone system.

8. (Currently Amended) A method comprising instructing a user to replace the separator symbols within an original MICR format check identifier with replacement symbols, thereby obtaining a substitute check identifier;

wherein the original MICR format check identifier includes a routing number, an account number, a check number, and at least one separator symbol;

wherein the separator symbol is a non-numeric symbol; and

wherein the substitute check identifier includes the routing number, the account number, the check number, and at least one replacement symbol.

9. (Original) The method of Claim 8 further comprising instructing the user to enter the substitute check identifier with a computer keyboard.

10. (Original) The method of Claim 8 further comprising instructing the user to enter the substitute check identifier with a telephone keypad system.

11. (Currently Amended) A method of receiving a check identifier during a check transaction, the method comprising:

receiving a substitute check identifier, the substitute check identifier comprising a routing number, an account number and a check number, the substitute check identifier further including at least one replacement symbol wherein the replacement symbol substitutes for at least one separator symbol **[[s]]** within a MICR line; and

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processing the substitute check identifier to identify at least one of the routing number, the account number and the check number.

12. (Original) The method of Claim 11 wherein the replacement symbol is a symbol from a computer keyboard.

13. (Original) The method of Claim 11 wherein the replacement symbol is a symbol from a telephone keypad.

14. (Original) The method of Claim 11 wherein the replacement symbol is an asterisk.

15. (Original) The method of Claim 11 wherein the replacement symbol is a "#" symbol.

16. (Original) The method of Claim 11 wherein the act of processing the substitute check identifier identifies the routing number by searching for a field comprising at least nine digits.

17. (Original) The method of Claim 11 wherein the act of processing the substitute check identifier identifies the routing number by searching for a field comprising a predetermined number of digits.

18. (Original) The method of Claim 11 wherein the act of processing the substitute check identifier identifies the routing number by searching for a field that is not the last field within the substitute check identifier.

19. (Original) The method of Claim 11 wherein the act of processing the substitute check identifier identifies the account number by first identifying the routing field.

20. (Original) The method of Claim 11 wherein the act of processing the substitute check identifier identifies the check number by comparing the fields in the substitute check identifier to a separately entered check number.

21. (Original) The method of Claim 11 wherein the replacement symbol exists between the account number and the routing number.

22. (Original) The method of Claim 11 wherein the replacement symbol exists between the account number and the check number.

23. (Original) The method of Claim 11 wherein the replacement symbol exists at the beginning of the check identifier.

24. (Currently Amended) A method of receiving a check identifier during a check transaction, the method comprising:

receiving from a user, a substitute check identifier, wherein the substitute check identifier has at least one replacement symbol that is used in lieu of a separator symbol within an original check identifier, wherein the original check identifier comprises a routing number field, an account number field, a check number and at least one separator symbol, and wherein the substitute check identifier comprises the routing number field, the account number field, the check number, and at least one replacement symbol; and

parsing the received substitute check identifier to distinguish at least one of the routing number field, the account number field and the check number field.

25. (Original) The method of Claim 24, wherein the user is a customer.

26. (Original) The method of Claim 24, wherein the user is a merchant operator.

27. (Original) The method of Claim 24, further comprising:

verifying that the entered substitute check identifier includes at least one replacement symbol; and

if the substitute check identifier does not include at least one replacement symbol, instructing the user to enter a substitute check identifier with at least one replacement symbol.

28. (Original) The method of Claim 24, wherein the act of parsing comprises identifying a first nine-digit distinguished field within the substitute check identifier as the routing number.

29. (Original) The method of Claim 24, wherein the act of parsing comprises identifying a distinguished field that matches the user-entered check number as the check number field, and identifying the routing number field.

30-37. (Canceled)

38. (Original) A system for receiving a check identifier during a check transaction, the system comprising a means for receiving a substitute check identifier, wherein the substitute check identifier comprises at least one replacement symbol that

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replaces at least one separator symbol within an original MICR format check identifier with at least one generic symbol.